Project Update: September 2015

The project is progressing smoothly in line with the proposed plan. The targets achieved by the project so far (September 2015) are:

1. Abundance of Galliformes in Wangchuck Centennial National Park for Winter (February-March) and Spring (April- May).
2. Habitat use of Galliformes in WCNP.
3. Survey and awareness to nomadic herders in the study area.

1. Abundance of Galliformes in Wangchuck Centennial National Park for winter (Feb-March) and spring (April- May)

Abundance of Galliformes in Wangchuck Centennial National Park (WCNP), Bhutan was investigated for two seasons during winter (February-March) and spring (April-May) of 2015, achieving data of four species namely, blood pheasant (*Ithaginis cruentus*), Himalayan monal (*Lophophorus impejanus*), hill partridge (*Arborophila torqueola*) and Satyr tragopan *(Tragopan satyra*). In total, there were 72 visual encounters (167 individuals) of Galliformes. Satyr tragopan was encountered only twice (n=2, 4 individuals) in the study area thereby leaving no scope for further analysis. The density estimates for Galliformes were relatively low for blood pheasant (2.20 ± 0.25/Km2), Himalayan monal (3.32 ± 1.17/Km2) and hill partridge (1.70 ± 0.49/Km2) in the study area. Blood pheasant was encountered the most (0.662±0.150/Km), followed by Himalayan monal (0.407±0.140/Km) and then hill partridge (0.154±0.050/Km).

2. Habitat use of Galliformes in WCNP

The three Galliformes tend to vary in use of habitat significantly. While the Himalayan monal used mostly the subalpine forests with low canopy cover and juniper scrub, Blood pheasant mostly used fir forest with moderate canopy cover and hill partridge used dense temperate forests with high tree cover.

3. Survey and awareness to nomadic herders in the study area

Survey was carried out in March 2015 when nomadic herders were residing in the lower elevation with their yaks in the study area. The survey was aimed to understand their observational estimation of Galliformes in the area, species known to them and their general attitude towards conservation and Galliformes. We came to know that the nomadic herders were aware of government's conservational effort, due to the park activities and enforcement. Although poaching is uncommon, anthropogenic pressure and forest fire may pose serious threats to Galliformes. Besides, Bhutan is also lagging behind in terms of research and monitoring of Gallifomes and therefore these aspects need immediate attention for timely intervention.

Photo 1. Methodological application in field

Left to Right: Clearing and marking transects; During observation; Transect walk and Undertaking call count exercise.

Photo 2. Interaction and awareness to nomadic herders